

Some important facts about these industries should be noted. The construction industry represents 8 percent of our Nation's gross domestic product and accounts for 5 percent of total U.S. employment. The construction industry puts more than \$850 billion of products in place annually and employs more than 8.6 million people. Even in a recession, the construction and construction materials industries added 63,000 jobs. These numbers are staggering and impressive and result from the very successful TEA 21 Act that funds the federal highway road program.

These are America's builders. Through their hard work, the wilderness that was America was transformed into a stronghold of productivity and commerce.

These groups build our roads and highways, airports, and rail beds—the networks that connect our cities, our communities, and our families. They build our homes, our workplaces, our churches, our schools, and our hospitals.

They build and maintain our utilities, including water and sewer facilities, natural gas pipelines and telecommunications systems. They build these underground lifelines that keep America secure and thriving.

Not only do they build—they rebuild. In the true spirit of America they responded after September 11 by sending manpower, materials, equipment, and money to the New York City World Trade Center and the Pentagon to help heal the wounds inflicted on America by the terrorist attacks. Members of these associations continue their efforts to erase these scars that mar our landscape.

The construction and construction materials industries have built Americans' a quality of life and ensured a prosperous future for our country and its people.

We all take pride in the work these "Builders of America" do every day. On the eve of CONEXPO-CON/AGG 2002, we extend our sincerest thanks and best wishes to the construction and construction materials industries for a successful trade shows that is "An Experience to Build On."

CLASS ACTION FAIRNESS ACT OF 2002

SPEECH OF

HON. GREGORY W. MEEKS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, March 13, 2002

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2341) to amend the procedures that apply to consideration of interstate class actions to assure fairer outcomes for class members and defendants, to outlaw certain practices that provide inadequate settlements for class members, to assure that attorneys do not receive a disproportionate amount of settlements at the expense of class members, to provide for clearer and simpler information in class action settlement notices, to assure prompt consideration of interstate class actions, to amend title 28, United States Code, to allow the application of the principles of Federal diversity jurisdiction to interstate class actions, and for other purposes.

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Mr. Chairman, in an age when corporate wrongdoing is a daily front page headline, now is not the time for

Congress to bend the rules that allow injured consumers and workers access to the civil justice system.

Proponents of H.R. 2341 insist that a class action crisis threatens the well being of U.S. courts this is simply not true. There is no statistical evidence of a class action crisis. In fact, the Federal and State judiciaries have consistently opposed efforts to "federalize" class actions believing that state courts are perfectly capable of handling their own matters without interference from the Federal judiciary. There is simply no need for massive civil justice reform, especially reform like H.R. 2341 that limits the rights of consumers to seek redress against wrongdoers.

Currently, class action suits provide access to justice for thousands of American consumers and small businesses that would otherwise have no realistic means of taking their case to court. Unfortunately this legislation is an attempt to deny American consumers and small businesses by making plaintiffs jump through multiple hurdles to bring class actions, allowing proponents of this bill to accomplish their policy goal at the expense of consumers who have been harmed by corporate wrongdoers.

Today we are given the opportunity to make a clear choice between the legal rights of powerful corporations that break the rules, and the legal rights of the families, retirees and consumers they harm. Today we cannot turn our backs on those who depend on us. Today we must stand up for those who stand the greater harm by opposing H.R. 2341.

CONGRATULATIONS, GIRL SCOUTS, ON 90 YEARS OF WONDERFUL SERVICE

HON. DAVID VITTER

OF LOUISIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Mr. VITTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Girl Scouts of America. In March 1912, Juliette Gordon Low, a visionary from Savannah, GA, formed an organization that has become the world's preeminent organization dedicated solely to girls.

Girl Scouting encourages girls to develop their full potential, to believe in themselves, to respect others, and to make a contribution to the world around them. In an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. In partnership with committed adults, girls develop qualities that will serve them all of their lives—like strong values, a social conscience and conviction about their own potential and self worth.

The Girl Scout Council of Southeast Louisiana provides a positive impact on our entire region by the services and activities they provide. I salute the adult troop leaders who volunteer their time to serve as role models for the thousands of Girl Scouts in our community. As the father of a Brownie, I see first hand the enjoyment and enrichment that Girl Scouting provides.

Could Juliette Gordon Low have known in 1912 when she sold her pearls to give Girl Scouting financial backing that millions of girls would benefit from her generosity? She would

be proud to know that Girl Scouting is still going strong and shaping lives. Congratulations Girl Scouts on 90 years of wonderful service.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "GENOMIC RESEARCH AND DIAGNOSTIC ACCESSIBILITY ACT OF 2002" H.R. 3967 AND THE "GENOMIC SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION ACT OF 2002" H.R. 3966

HON. LYNN N. RIVERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 14, 2002

Ms. RIVERS. Mr. Speaker, evidence is mounting that the patenting of human genes is both inhibiting important biomedical research and interfering with patient care. Today I am introducing two bills that address these increasingly troublesome effects of human gene patenting.

Despite resistance from many of our European allies and the popular view in this country that owning the rights to a part of the human body is inappropriate and even immoral, patenting of human genetic sequences is accelerating rapidly. Eight thousand patents on genes or genetic material have already been issued by the Patent and Trademark Office (PTO), including at least 1,500 on human genetic material. Tens of thousands of additional human gene patents await examination by the PTO. And while the criteria for awarding gene patents have been marginally tightened in recent years, progress toward patenting of the entire human genetic sequence continues unabated. There is little doubt that most of the significant claims on our genetic code will be tied up as private property within a very few years.

What does it mean to own a human gene patent? It means that the gene patent holder controls any use of "its" gene, a gene that is found in virtually every human being on the planet. The patent holder can prevent my doctor from looking in my body to see if I have that gene. The patent holder can prevent anyone else from doing research to improve a genetic test or to develop a gene therapy based on that gene.

PTO's grant of total ownership in genes has already led to some very unusual moral and medical dilemmas. In one well-publicized case, Miami Children's Hospital—the owner of the gene responsible for the fatal neurological disorder Canavan disease—is being sued by the families of dead and dying children who provided the tissue samples which enabled the hospital's researchers to discover the gene's function. The Canavan parents had sought the help of hospital researchers in order to develop testing that was accessible and affordable to the public. Instead, when Miami Children's Hospital discovered the Canavan gene, it secretly filed a patent and now prevents doctors from testing or examining patients for the gene without paying the hospital a fixed royalty fee, even though those doctors could do so without using any product or device invented by MCH. The Canavan families claim that the terms under which the hospital is licensing use of the gene are slowing progress into finding a cure or therapy for the disease.